

January 29, 2016

The Honorable Johnny Isakson
United States Senator
131 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mark Warner
United States Senator
475 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senators Isakson and Warner:

The undersigned organizations applaud the Chronic Care Working Group (“Working Group”) for its work to address the challenges borne by Medicare beneficiaries who suffer from chronic conditions. We very much appreciate the effort that went into producing this document and were encouraged that the Working Group’s policy options paper released on December 18th included consideration of the impact that U.S. obesity rates have on the prevalence of chronic conditions. Numerous healthcare professional and patient organizations recognize that obesity is a chronic medical condition that is associated with, or a precursor to, more than 90 other chronic medical conditions including cardiovascular disease, diabetes, and cancer.

As you know, obesity rates in America have reached epic proportions. Today, more than one in three U.S. adults have obesity and more than 40 percent of adults between the ages of 65 to 74 have obesity, costing American taxpayers hundreds of billions of dollars every year. The annual medical costs for an individual with obesity are \$2,741 higher than medical costs for a patient of normal weight. This results in over \$300 billion in direct health care spending attributable to obesity every year, including \$55 billion paid by Medicare to treat beneficiaries with obesity. Clearly, this is a problem we can no longer afford to ignore.

These sobering facts and the growing science surrounding obesity underscore the importance of developing a policy approach that facilitates patient access to the full continuum of care of evidence-based obesity prevention and treatment modalities including behavioral, pharmaceutical, psychosocial, nutritional, and surgical interventions. The Working Group’s initial policy options paper recognizes this by its inclusion of a study to evaluate the utilization and impact of pharmaceutical and other therapies for individuals with obesity.

We look forward to collaborating with the Working Group to further strengthen the policies addressing obesity found in the White Paper. This will help ensure they have maximum impact by securing patient access to the care they need.

We appreciate your consideration of this important matter and look forward to discussing in more detail during future deliberations of the Working Group.

Sincerely,

Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics
American Academy of Physician Assistants

American Council on Exercise
American Medical Women's Association
American Psychological Association
American Society for Metabolic and Bariatric Surgery
American Society of Bariatric Physicians
Campaign to End Obesity Action Fund
Eisai, Inc.
Endocrine Society
EnteroMedics
Healthcare Leadership Council
Obesity Action Coalition
Prevent Cancer Foundation
National Alliance on Mental Illness
Novo Nordisk, Inc.
Takeda Pharmaceuticals USA, Inc.
The Obesity Society
Tigerlily Foundation

CC: The Honorable Orrin Hatch, Chairman, Senate Committee on Finance
The Honorable Ron Wyden, Ranking Member, Senate Committee on Finance